

VZCZCXRO3815
OO RUEHCHI RUEHDT RUEHHM
DE RUEHML #1822 1542313
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 032313Z JUN 07
FM AMEMBASSY MANILA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6778
INFO RHHMUNA/CDRUSPACOM HONOLULU HI IMMEDIATE
RUEHXS/ASEAN COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE

UNCLAS MANILA 001822

SIPDIS

SIPDIS
PLEASE PASS TO USDVA, ABMC

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PREL](#) [RP](#)
SUBJECT: MEMORIAL DAY AT MANILA'S AMERICAN BATTLE MONUMENTS
COMMISSION CEMETERY

¶1. We enhanced this year's Memorial Day ceremony at the American Cemetery, expanding our guest list, attracting media coverage, inviting the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines to make remarks, and offering a reception for U.S. and Filipino veterans after the laying of wreaths. The Embassy community came together with representatives of the Philippine government, the diplomatic corps, surviving veterans of World War II, many civic groups, and members of the general public for a moving ceremony, ringed by beautifully landscaped lawns studded with row upon row of marble headstones, the final resting place of more than 17,000 men and women who fought and died throughout Southeast Asia in World War II. At each headstone were small American and Philippine flags that Embassy and community volunteers had planted the previous day.

¶2. In her remarks, the Ambassador honored all of those who died in the line of duty and urged the audience to do more than simply remember their great sacrifice. Rather, she stated that truly to honor those who had given their lives meant that we should continue the fight for global freedom and democracy wherever they are under attack. She also stressed that, while today's challenges to those ideals are great, greater still is the power of those seeking to preserve and protect them when they stand together. She held up the long and close relationship of the U.S. and the Philippines as an example of that strength.

¶3. Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, Gen. Hermogenes C. Esperon, was clearly deeply honored to be invited to speak as the senior representative of the Philippine government. His words were moving:

quote

More important than commemorating those fallen heroes' sacrifices is remembering to "keep alive" the ideals they died for. I know in my heart that you and I - Americans and Filipinos alike - have never wavered in championing the cause of freedom and democracy and of peace and security. Within our shores and beyond, we have both been working in defense of these ideals. We continue to struggle and render sacrifices towards the preservation of what we hold dear. Through our relentless war against terrorism, we continue to embody the sacred values for which the patriots, whom we commemorate today, fought and died. . . .

On this poignant day of commemoration, therefore, I share with you our commitment to carry on our common ideals in honor of our fallen comrades, and for the sake of the present and future generations of freedom-lovers and for the continued vibrancy of democracy in both our countries and throughout the world.
End quote

¶4. Among the diverse organizations represented at the ceremony were the American World War II Orphans Network - many of whom were visiting their parents' graves for the first time - the "Battling Bastards of Bataan," the American Legion, the American Chamber of Commerce, the Eleventh Airborne Division, Thomasite Descendants of

the Philippines, and the Embassies of France, the United Kingdom, Australia and the Russian Federation. At the conclusion of the event, after the playing of Taps and Retirement of the Colors, the Ambassador hosted an open-air reception with light refreshments for all in attendance.

15. Media coverage of the event was extensive and highly favorable, underscoring our shared sacrifices and our common determination to remain as strong partners for the future.

KENNEY